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MARINES' SPECIAL RAIDER BATTALIONS GO INTO ACTION AT MAKIN AND SOLOMONS

The Marine Corps today disclosed that the August 17 attack on Makin, Japanese-held Pacific isle, was carried out by a special Raider Battalion, and that another unit of Raiders is participating in the Solomon Islands offensive.

It was the first official mention of the Raiders, whose equipment and methods of training have been closely guarded secrets.

These compact, self-sufficient battalions add a swiftness and striking power to amphibious warfare comparable to paratroop operations in land battles. Heavily armed for close-range combat, the Raiders are thrown into the attack from transport vessels which have the speed and maneuverability of a destroyer.

In surprise landings like that on Makin, their objective may be to destroy air and naval bases, communications centers, ammunition dumps, military stores, and defensive installations. They seek to bring back vital information about the disposition of enemy forces, intelligence concerning his future plans, and prisoners. A Raider attack may be in support of offensive action elsewhere in the same theater of operations, or may serve to create a diversion.

The Raiders are trained also to function as the spearhead of a full-scale invasion. This may have been their role in the Solomon offensive, or they may have entered the battle at a later stage, perhaps attacking the enemy from the rear after effecting a surprise rubber-boat landing.

The men of the Raider Battalions are hand-picked from a flood of volunteers for these doubly hazardous assignments. As fully trained Marines, they constitute from the beginning a powerful force adept at close-range fighting and schooled in amphibious warfare. Their non-coms are hard-bitten veterans.

In rigorous training these men become specialists in rubber-boat operations. Under the tutelage of Marine Colonel Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, they learn every technique of gouging, strangling, knifing, bayoneting and otherwise putting an enemy out of action. Each Raider Battalion has its snipers, armorers, chemical warfare specialists and munitions and demolition experts.

Night attacks, carried out in complete darkness under the most difficult conditions, are stressed in training exercises covering 20 miles or more. The Raiders learn to depend upon the stars as well as compasses for direction, and are instructed in woodlore during long periods spent in the field.

Carrying everything on their backs, the Raiders are expected to reach a maximum speed of seven miles in an hour, half running and half walking. On longer hikes they cover between three and five miles an hour. Each man must be a thoroughly capable swimmer.

The Raider Battalions carry a relatively large number of automatic rifles and sub-machine guns, in addition to semi-automatic Garand rifles and pistols. Every raider is taught to shoot from the hip with whatever weapon he carries, or from any impromptu position in which he might find himself during an attack. He also carries a knife, a highly important weapon for silencing enemy outposts. Besides its obvious use as a dagger, the Raider learns to throw it accurately and with force enough to kill or disable an enemy at close range.

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